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Renewed Morality

Dutch Pastoral Council

Authority: Some Distinctions

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The Local Church

It will be to the everlasting credit of Dutch Catholics that they pioneered in the delicate yet necessary task of restoring a sense of the responsibility of the local Church. Catholics in any nation must be one with the universal Church. Yet they must be equally responsive to the particular problems and opportunities presented by their local situation. There is a powerful case for unity in the universal Church; but there is also a case for legitimate diversity in the Churches that participate in that inseparable unity.

The bishops at Vatican Council II deepened our appreciation of the authentic nature of the local Church. It is not merely a branch office, or simply an administrative unit of a larger organization. It is the place where the whole Church is to be realized locally. "This Church of Christ," affirmed the Fathers at the Council, "is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful." Nor should Catholics anywhere regard this concept with misgiving since it is far from being a novelty or an innovation. It is an aspect of the Church constantly preached by St. Paul and the Great Church Fathers.

Vatican Council II reaffirmed a principle which was not completely neglected even in the years immediately preceding the Council. There were conspicuous differences in the piety, apostolate, and religious outlook among the German, French, Spanish and Irish Catholics, and a considerable understanding and tolerance of these legitimate differences. The Council encouraged and greatly extended this rudimentary diversity.

There will be unavoidable tensions, perhaps for a long time, as the Church strives both to be one universally, along with being consciously and legitimately diverse on the local level. We do not have to choose between chaos and rigid uniformity. Unity within diversity is the goal. Cardinal Alfrink has done us all an immense service by insisting that "the responsibility of the local Church and the responsibility of the universal Church do not exclude, but rather include, each other."

JOHN T. McGINN, C.S.P.

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The New Morality in Focus

Daniel C. Maguire

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE RENEWED MORALITY

The new morality is a complex phenomenon proceeding from multiple socio-cultural, cultural and religious factors. It is also the victim of a bad press. Everyone from barrister to bartender, from bishop to Beatle feels called to expatiate on it in a too definitive fashion. Vocal experts in the field of ethics have sallied forth and added to the muddle with their simplifications. "Love is the only absolute," they proclaim. "Study your situation and do the most loving thing!" Powerfully beautiful statements—and refreshing—but about as helpful for ethical decision-making as "Do good and avoid evil."

Add to this the fact that movies and motels have been basic *loci* for illustrative examples of the new ethic. This has served both to heighten general interest and to give the popularization of the new morality a decidedly sexual accent.

Small wonder that the responsible populace has assumed a dim view of it all. Good people are sure that it is a mini-morality, laxism and hedonism in modern dress. Many see in it the abandonment of moral principles and respect for the wisdom of the past. The teaching role of the Church is obviously threatened, if not dismissed.

Anything goes as long as it is done with love! However well-intentioned its purveyors, serious critics feel that the new morality is at root a "hippie" kind of code and the voice of moral chaos.

Meanwhile, back in the tomes, serious ethicists from the various Christian communities have been developing an ethical approach to modern challenges that promises an epochal and enriching renaissance of authentic Christian existence. If its public relations are poor, the theology in its main lines is welcome and heartening. The new moralist departs from the old morality, not because it asked too much, but precisely because it asked too little and, often enough, the unimportant and non-essential things. A better picture of what is happening will be attempted here.

The new morality is also old. It is just that the old seems new when rediscovered. Much in this case is as old as the Gospel of Jesus. Somehow or other, Christians have

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conspired to make the Good News seem bad. The Gospel comes across, especially to the young, as anti-fun, and many do not get much beyond that gloomy indictment. We have failed to communicate the news that Jesus challenged the world to try a new kind of love, a love that was more demanding, more electrifying and more humanizing than any ever known to man.

Not all loves are equally splendored things. Take, for example, narcissistic love. This love takes its name from the mythical youth who fell in love with his own image reflected in the pond. The saddest of men is he who never learns to love anyone but himself. Another kind of love is called *eros*. Eros at least gets beyond self and goes out to another. But still it is love with a hook in it. It is an investment that hopes for a return. It goes out to the other primarily because of the delight it finds there. At best, it is a step removed from Narcissus. Christian love is *agape* and it is an adventure, not an investment. It loves others for their own sake, without any hope of return. The whole business of morality and life, Jesus said, is summed up in this kind of love directed toward God and neighbor.

THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE OF JESUS

Jesus' message was this: If you want to love God, then love the way God loves. And God's love goes out to everyone without hope of return, especially to those who are least capable of returning anything: the poor, the beaten, the victims of hate and sinners who are gripped by evil. For one who loves like this, there is no enemy, no foreigner, no stranger. The other has become another self to be loved accordingly. (Obviously, if this is what it means to be a Christian, Christians are rare.)

The stress on love, then, is not an invention of the new morality; it is the substance of the moral teaching of Jesus Christ. The new morality sees in this agapic love an old and neglected challenge; and, as it faces up to the challenge, it rediscovers a second insight of the "old" morality—that Gospel love sometimes requires compromise.

It would seem that a love that called

for all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's mind would never deviate from the ideal. Yet, in this sin-ridden and confused world where God has only begun to establish his reign, a compromise is sometimes the truest response of love. Circumstances can be such that it becomes downright harmful and unloving to insist on the ideal. We must always be straining toward the ideal while remaining open to the possibility of loving compromise. This will remain true until God is all in all upon this earth. Until then, love will dictate both rules and exceptions to the rules.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE IDEAL

Examples of this are seen in Scripture and in the history of the Church. Jesus said that an ideal love turns the other cheek when struck; yet, when he was struck at his trial, he felt that circumstances did not permit the realization of the ideal, and so he protested. St. Paul exalted the dignity and freedom of persons, and yet he tolerated slavery in the situation of his day. War is an obvious departure from the ideal, and the Church has accepted it. The Gospel calls for permanent marriage, and yet the Church has permitted divorce in the so-called Pauline privilege and in the annulment of unconsummated marriages.

This is perhaps best explained by St. Thomas Aquinas when he discusses the nature of moral principles. The very general moral principles: "Do good; avoid evil. Love God and neighbor," admit of no exceptions. More particularized moral principles (Thomas calls them secondary precepts), do admit of exceptions in the sense that in particular circumstances they will be found non-applicable. Thomas gives a simple example: It is a valid moral principle that we should return borrowed things to their owner. However, if it is clear that the owner now intends to use the property held for him in a destructive fashion, you may decide that the above principle no longer applies. It is still a good principle, but due to circumstances, it ceases to be relevant.

Thomas used this same reasoning to justify the many wives of Old Testament figures. It is a good moral principle that a man may have but one wife; however, special circumstances justified an exception and permitted a plurality of wives.

All of morality is like this, says Thomas. Moral principles are valid most of the time. However, since morality is determined by circumstances as well as principles, special circumstances may dictate exceptions to the principles. This part of Thomas' moral theology had been rather neglected by Catholics until recently.

ABSOLUTE MORAL PRINCIPLES

This does not mean that there are no absolute moral values. The sacredness of life, for example, must always be respected. However, in certain cases, a man may kill. The moral problem is to determine what instances of killing are, because of special circumstances, compatible with a respect for life. With this in mind, Catholic theologians have begun to suggest that we reconsider our stand on abortion. That fetal life must be protected is certainly a sacred moral principle. In certain emergencies, theologians suggest, exceptions to this principle might be morally indicated. Other theologians are applying this type of reasoning to divorce and remarriage. Like war, they argue, divorce is always tragic; but, like war, it might at times also be necessary and moral. The duty for Christians, of course, is to work for conditions where such solutions are no longer necessary.

All of this is basically old theology. What is *new* with the "new" morality? First of all, a lot of new and important emphases, but we shall touch on them singly. Important and new is our deepened understanding of such things as the interdependence of nations, the implications of personhood, the need for mature autonomy, the meaning of marriage and sexuality, etc. Deepened understanding often leads to new conclusions. New also is the complexity of modern life. Moral questions never asked before arise from this complexity. The owner of a little general store in the coun-

try a century ago could run on a rather simple code of ethics. Not so the corporation businessman of today, who simply must learn to live with moral ambiguity. As complexity grows, "exceptional" cases multiply. Remembering that love makes its demands through the situations of life, as well as through principles, one should expect much newness in the revolutionized society of today.

Christian morality is the morality of a believer and a listener. The new morality stresses this. It presupposes a God who speaks, a God who, in creating us, has called us into an unending dialogue with himself. The God of our Scriptures shows that he acts and speaks in our history and calls us each by name. Morality is thus a matter of response, not to a law but to a person. The Christian must have good antennae. "Speak, Lord, your servant listens," is the prayer of a moral man. Finding out what God is doing and, then, joining him is the essence of morality.

GOD'S ACTION IN THE WORLD

A man who has really got hold of this message is one who, in opening the morning newspaper, says: "Let's see what God is up to today!" He doesn't feel that God's will is totally expressed in the missal or the catechism. He senses that God is moving in the world, creating, loving and inviting response. Faith will find him. The news may be a lagging poverty program or a missed opportunity for peace negotiations; it may be riots or pending usury legislation. Christian love will discern what the Lord's interests are and pitch in. The Christian's circumstances may limit his participation, but he is not free to be uninvolved. A Christian who is detached in matters of peace, poverty, or racial disharmony is an apostate. "He who is not with me is against me!" It's as simple as that.

"She is an immoral woman." "He was arrested on a morals charge." "...for immoral purposes." What are we talking about? Sex, obviously. And it is a macabre tribute to how "hung up" we are on sex that it can become the prime point of

reference for the terms moral and immoral. (A caricature of this myopia is provided by the German chaplains who accompanied the troops in the ruthless invasion of Holland, zealously urging the men to avoid the Dutch prostitutes.) Let it be said once and for all: Sex is not the prime moral reality or problem—not even for the young. The new morality is reasserting the social character of the Gospel and the more basic evangelical demands.

**FOR SELF
OR
FOR OTHERS**

The revelation of the mystery of God in trinity points up sharply the social nature of man. "For-ness" marks the inner, personal life of God. Father is seen as existing totally *for* Son. His being is to be *for* the Son and in so doing he gives being to that Son. Father and Son exist *for* and give being to the Spirit. To be is to be for the other. This is the mystery of trinitarian life and it is in the image of this life that we were fashioned. To be a person is to be for other persons. To be for self is sin. It is against this background that we can appreciate the restless love of Jesus for men, especially for men who most needed someone to be for them. Notice the judgment scene of Matthew 25. Jesus identifies himself with the down and out, and he welcomes to the kingdom those who were for him *in a practical way* when he was a convict, or naked, thirsty, hungry, sick, or alone. And when the comfortable good people protested that they never knowingly slighted the Lord, he replied that they didn't look for him where he was.

We are little inclined to look for God in the rioting Negro, the homosexual, the addict, the mentally ill, the undernourished and starving of the world, in criminals, or in poor, emerging nations. The new morality is reminding us that we must meet God here. And we must meet him effectively—not just as individuals, who avail little in mass society—but with the power of the institutional Church and through the essential medium of national politics. The ancient liturgies prayed to God as "*all powerful* and *merciful*." It takes power for

mercy to be functional, especially today. Another reminder from the new morality.

To be really open to the demands of love is complicating and exhausting. Most people opt out. Law provides them a gracious exit. The new morality is not saying that laws are not needed—love cannot function without law! The defendant here is not law but legalism, a misuse of the law that frustrates love.

Legalism is a gimmick that people use to get all wrapped up in lesser laws and thus evade the heart of the matter. Those who do this are terribly serious about the lesser laws on which they focus. This helps them to feel justified and to forget how really dishonest they are.

**LEGALISM
AN
ESCAPE**

The Old Testament contained the law of love, too. When Jesus asked for a summary of the law, a scribe was able to give him the double commandment of love of God and neighbor. But Old Testament folk also found the legalist escape hatch. An example: The sabbath was to be a weekly day of recollection when work would be put aside and there would be time for worship and rest and meditation. Worship, however, is not easy, especially when it calls for total commitment to the will of God. So the emphasis came to fall on the "no work" part of the sabbath. And this was enforced with a vengeance to the cruel neglect of love. Way back in the book of Numbers we read of a poor man who dared to gather sticks on the sabbath. The Hebrew legalists stoned him to death. Widows and orphans were exploited without much public shock while the moralists of Israel pondered minute violations of the sabbath rest. They condemned the untying of a knot on the sabbath. Also on the condemned list: putting out a lamp, sewing two stitches (one was permitted), moving objects from place to place. Some felt it was "forbidden work" to defend oneself against attack. Indeed, bodily functions were, as far as possible, to be suppressed! And, just before the time of Jesus, some experts felt that it was wrong to eat an egg laid on the sabbath.

(Egg-laying was clearly work and so the principle of cooperation obtained.)

Absurd? Yes, but the old law has no monopoly on such deceits. We still cheat love by being selective in our obedience. The legalist establishes sanctity symbols. By being faithful in these matters, he convinces himself he is a good man. The pharisee gave tithes of all he possessed and thus felt justified. Friday abstinence, Mass attendance and avoidance of contraceptives became the sanctity package of many Catholics, while numerous Protestants chose to concentrate on banning smoking, drinking or Sunday dancing. All of which is a lot easier than loving as Christ did.

A HUMBLE MORALITY

The new morality realizes that God can ask more than is asked in a neat code of laws. So does the legalist, but he prefers the code. (After all, it is easier to scruple about fasting than to welcome a Negro neighbor or really forgive an enemy.) But, sadly, his little code makes the legalist a proud and dangerous man. Since he has a simple and set standard of goodness, he is quick and sure about condemning those who do not measure up. "We have a law, and according to that law he must die." Those were the words of a legalist. The new morality recognizes with Augustine and Thomas that the law of Christ is the Holy Spirit who is poured into our hearts. It is primarily the Spirit, not a written code, that tests us; and, since the Spirit's ways are not ours, we are in no position to judge others. Still, we do. That great Christian, H. Richard Niebuhr, summed it up: "We all tend to explain Christianity in such a way as to include ourselves and exclude others." The new morality is a humble morality. It directs us to the back of the temple where a publican admits in God's good grace that he is a sinful man.

A final word on another old strategem of the legalist: the unreal distinction. A modern example: political as distinct from moral. Thus, open occupancy legislation will not be supported on grounds that it is a political, not a moral, matter. Military

strategy, too, tends to be lifted to the transmoral realm where it is immune to the moral judgment of the citizenry. The new morality is splashing light on this legalistic skulduggery and reasserting the moral dimension of everything that involves the life and dignity of persons.

The Second Vatican Council, which embodies much of the new morality, has asked the laity to grow up. Of course, we cannot fully blame the laity for their prolonged moral juvenility. They are largely the victims of a paternalistic culture and an overly protective clergy. This, at last, is passing.

The immaturity of children is presumed, as is their need for extensive help in decision-making. Still, the Council says that even children "have a right to be encouraged to weigh moral values with an upright conscience, and to embrace them by personal choice" (*Declaration on Christian Education*, n. 1). Obviously, this is more true of adults. The more maturity, the less need for external direction.

AID FOR MATURE MORAL DECISION

What will this do to Church teaching in the area of morality? Father Springer remarks: "This can only mean that moral teaching in the Church must take more the form of broad guidelines for human conduct and be less the detailed codes of rules it was in the past." Growing up is painful, and people will resist the burden of moral responsibility. For too long they have been looking upon clergy and hierarchy as oracles whence emanated detailed instructions for living. The Council has tolled the knell of such naiveté. "Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission" (*Constitution on the Church*, n. 43). It would be equally naive to expect the bishops or the pope to assume the role of conscience for the laity.

What kind of help can maturing Catholics expect from their maturing Church in the future? The Dutch Catechism, provided

and approved by the bishops of Holland, gives us an example. To the debated question of what means of birth control are moral, the catechism replies:

To this question the Council gave no answer. The Council directs all married people to search their conscience and ask themselves whether these methods actually do justice to the great personal values which must come to expression in love relationship and in marriage. . . .

Neither a doctor nor pastor of souls pronounces a final judgment of conscience; but respect for life requires that no practice be chosen which can cause serious physical or psychological damage [author's translation].

This is obviously a new way of teaching. The decision about what means to use has been shifted to the married couple; and, since physical or psychological damage is not expected of most contraceptive means, an expanded liberty of choice is offered. How ready the laity are for this responsible freedom remains to be seen. Many, through weakness, will still wait for the decision to be made for them.

SUNDAY MASS ATTENDANCE

When a pastor of a large suburban parish was told that the new moralists were saying that it is not a mortal sin to miss Mass on Sunday, he panicked and blurted: "They're going too far! That's the goose that lays the golden egg!" Undoubtedly, he had reference to the rich spiritual benefits that attach to weekly worship. The good man's dismay was unnecessary. The new moralists are not playing down the value of Sunday Mass. They do, however, take exception to the theological implications of certain infelicitous expressions such as "obliged to attend Mass under pain of mortal sin." These words easily suggest much that is unreal, as though sin were automatic or something with which you could be punished.

They seem to imply that it is automatically a sin to miss Mass without an important cause. Sin is simply not automatic any more than falling in love or out

of it is automatic. Serious sin involves a radical realignment of one's deepest affections. It cannot easily be encompassed in terms of a single act. A single act might indeed climax a substantial change in one's fundamental moral option, and so represent a notable change in the direction of one's life. Missing Sunday Mass without serious reason might or might not represent such a change: (Many a young person who absents himself from Mass has a serious desire for an authentic and meaningful liturgy. Those of us who haven't provided it are more worthy of indictment.)

HOW DETERMINE GRAVITY?

The seriousness of Church laws does not depend on the will of the ecclesiastical lawgivers. "On the contrary," Father Richard McCormick says, "the lawgiver prescribes the thing, and its gravity is determined by its importance to the Christian way of life. It is the task of the responsible Christian (above all, the specialist) accurately to assess this importance." If no serious harm is done to one's Christian commitment, there is no serious sin. To allege that something is seriously wrong when it does no serious harm is nominalism. The new morality rejects this in the name of realism. Serious Church law may be presumed to embody a serious moral and religious value. It may not be presumed that particular transgressions of these laws necessarily involve a radical repudiation of these values. To be objective and realistic, you must view all the real factors involved and not just the law and the material fact of transgression.

A lack of realism has also pervaded other moral zones. In the field of sexual ethics, for example, the term "mortal sin" has been brandished too glibly as a kind of disciplinary weapon. Certain actions such as "French kissing" have, at times, been labeled mortally wrong with no reference to the harm done, to individual differences, or to the role of conscience. The decisive factor in judging moral guilt in sexual matters has often been the pleasure taken rather than the harm done. This led to frustrating

and largely academic examinations of whether or not pleasure was consented to. (The term "ecclesiogenic neurosis" has been used to describe the result of such scrutiny.)

Such a Freudian, anti-instinctual approach to sexual morality is not blessed by the new morality which prefers a realism that is more germane to the biblical outlook. David was not reproached for the pleasure he experienced with Bethsheba but for his exploitation of her. It was his dishonesty and injustice that made his action detestable. The new moralists admire the sexual realism of St. Paul, who appreciated the mysterious unitive power of the sexual act, even when it is performed with a harlot. In a sense, the new morality takes sex more seriously than the old, but without brooding over it as much. Sex is clearly one of nature's finest liturgies—so fine and personal, indeed, that it becomes dehumanizing when it is reduced to mere fun. In questions of premarital sexuality, the burden is on the couple involved to see whether this or that action leads to expressions of intimacy that are dishonest and exploitative since they bespeak a commitment that is not present.

LEARNING FROM SECULAR SCIENCE

Good people will feel vindicated in their common sense when they hear new moralists saying that a phenomenon such as adolescent masturbation can scarcely be treated in terms of mortal sin. Vatican II has directed moralists to be attuned to the data of the scientific disciplines. Experts tell us that 90 percent of boys go through a masturbatory phase and that this usually represents a development in the integration of sexuality into the personality. Good counseling will help the young to grow gradually out of this narcissistic phase. In the past we often added unnecessary guilt feelings to this sensitive period of maturation. We also managed to put God in the embarrassing position of demanding something that most youth could not achieve. A bitter alienation from religion and a dis-

affection with authority figures often resulted from this

Moral theology should be a happy science. It hasn't always been. In fact, it developed into a kind of spiritual pathology, a science of sin detection and analysis. Here again the new morality is corrective. There is no denying that man in his freedom has a right to know the minimal requirements of moral law. But a morality that succumbs to minimalism is like a book on mountain climbing that tells you little on how to climb but concentrates on how far back you can lean without falling. The new morality accentuates the positive. It focuses less on lies and more on the meaning of honesty in interpersonal relationship; it ponders adultery less (and makes it less likely) by exploring how a husband can love his wife as Christ loved the Church and give himself for it. It is more centered on do's than don'ts and sees situations less as problems and more as challenges.

NECESSARY RISK IN A MATURE MORALITY

Bergson said there are two kinds of morality: the morality of survival and the morality of creativity. We have no choice but to be creative, since it is with the creator God that we unite in moral action. The morality of survival, in which we have liberally indulged, is obsessed with self-preservation. It is *me*-centered and fear-ridden. And since fear is the bane of imagination and sensitivity, this morality is bankrupt in both regards. One of the greatest sins of Christians has been their dearth of imagination in response to the moral needs of persons and society.

Creativity, of course, involves risk and any creative breakthrough in morality or religion is always resisted by the forces of preservation. Thus it was that Socrates got the hemlock and Jesus, the cross.

It seems that, amid the myriad decisions of each lifetime, two fundamental alternatives are possible: suicide or eucharist. A man may look at life and see the mystery of evil that grips it. He may recoil and say "no," and this is suicidal. Fear,

coldness and noninvolvement are the symptoms of suicidal man.

The Christian looks at life and says "yes" with thanks. He experiences hope more keenly than evil, and so his mood is eucharistic. He knows that the decision to affirm life, to redeem it and enrich it, can

be costly. Jesus said "yes" and gave thanks in the cup of his blood. Yet the Christian is confident that the end of existence is not death but resurrection and so his "yes" perdures. It is the song of such a "yes" that the new morality sings.



ST. AUGUSTINE ON SIN

St. Augustine's lapidary expression is well known: There are only two possible loves for us, the love of God to the forgetfulness of self, or the love of self to the forgetfulness and denial of God. At first sight this alternative might seem simplist and foreign to the variety and multiplicity of choices offered to man. But on the level of our fundamental option, St. Augustine could not have expressed himself more correctly. On that level there is only one possible alternative: love of God through love of others, for that is our human condition; or else love of self, the voluntary inclusion in oneself under all the forms of vanity, brutal and even sensual egoism, pride, or simply in the form of spiritual atrophy by a drawing into oneself, a slackening of our activity, a kind of flight from reality and others into a minute world of imagination or bourgeois comfort. This self-love is sin, the only definitive evil of man.

PIET FRANZEN

Address to The Dutch National Pastoral Council

Cardinal Bernard Alfrink

At the beginning of this second session I should like to say a few words of welcome on behalf of the presidium. A special welcome to those new delegates and experts that attend for the first time. But also to all those who have already experienced what a plenary meeting is like. They may be more able to assess the meaning of this event, and they see it as a common consultation in which we do not form opposing parties, but in which we search together for what is our common task and responsibility. Let us hope that this new deliberation will again lead to a Gospel-inspired witness-ing of what we want to believe and to per-form.

It is important that we keep confidence in our own pastoral deliberation, even if it is not yet perfect. It is a fact that the pastoral council, even after two plenary meetings, is still too little of a living reality among the priests and the faithful. Many people feel insufficiently engaged in what is happening here and in the things that, in their opinion, are too much imposed from above in this council. We can hear these critical opinions among the young, but also among the old, and especially among the older priests. Sometimes certain social

groups feel underrepresented, or it is thought that the voice of "alarmed people" is not sufficiently heard.

Again, we will probably never reach a perfect representation, but it might be pos-sible to make better use of the possibilities of contributing and influencing the decisions that exist on the level of deaneries and dio-ceses.

The council is much more than the plenary meeting which takes not more than a week, or a week and a half, each year. What happens before and after it is, after all, more important. We may think of the dis-cussion groups, the work of the experts, pas-toral guidance and preaching in the par-ishes.

We are glad that it has been possible,

This address was delivered by Cardinal Alfrink (Jan. 6) at the third session of the Dutch Na-tional Pastoral Council. Elected delegates represented the clergy, religious and laity of the Netherlands, who freely expressed their problems and possible solutions. This, along with the scholarship, loy-alty, courage and realism of the Dutch Cardinal, makes this a history-making event of the post-conciliar era.

for the first time, to send the draft reports to all priests; this may strengthen their feeling that the council is also their business. We do not overestimate the meaning of the plenary meeting, but we still see this deliberation as a useful and justifiable means to practice a new style of leadership, which is in perfect accordance with Vatican II.

It goes without saying that, at the beginning of a new meeting, there is a report about what has been done with the recommendations of the previous meeting. Have they remained words, or has something been done with the things that were brought forward here with so much conviction? Have we really done anything, or is this council, as it is sometimes said, only a band of tattlers?

In order to save time I have asked for a note to be drawn up; it will be handed to you presently. You can judge yourself whether we are on the right track. The presidium is responsible for the execution, but it cannot carry out this task without the cooperation of the dioceses and of the various authorities, who can also, on the basis of the decisions of this council, start action on their own initiative.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR THE COUNCIL

All the same, I should like to express a few wishes here. First of all about our unity among each other. A rightful multiformity is good, but we are sometimes in need to learn how to discuss even difficult and emotional subjects in a spirit of love, and how to find the tolerance to preserve unity.

We cannot turn back the clock and revive the polemics of the 18th century, when nearly everyone started playing the theologian. "The furor theologians," it says in Father Polman's book about Catholic Holland in the 18th century, "spread from the shepherds to the flock, so that those started judging who were by no means qualified or competent to do so . . . thus parties grew up that fought against each other and, which is worse, systematically avoided each other. . . ."

The author is right in concluding: "Re-

ligious tolerance with regard to diverging doctrine was still a babe in its cradle. It had to grow into adulthood before it became possible to be tolerant toward living beings in whom doctrine seemed to have become incarnated."

It is our hope that tolerance has developed so far in our days that none of the faithful need feel wronged by our pastoral deliberation.

A second wish regards our allegiance to the other churches and denominational groups, to whose representatives I extend a hearty welcome. We really hope and trust that you will go on helping us, with your prayers, your studies and also your criticism. For many of the things we are experiencing in this period of risking confidence, you have already often gone through, and very deeply at that. On the other hand, we promise you all kinds of support and cooperation on the road to church unity.

Another word of welcome extends to our guests from abroad, especially the representatives of the episcopates of Belgium and Germany, the bishops from other parts of the world, the representative of the nunciature, and other guests from Rome. Their presence and our invitation to them symbolize the firm will to remain linked with the Church universal, which is dear to us.

THE NEED FOR DIVERSITY WITHIN UNITY

Here too, we stick to the principle of a justifiable diversity. "Without the reality of the local Churches, the one Church of Christ cannot be found on this earth." Every local Church is given the responsibility to find out in what concrete manner the one mystery of the Church must be given shape.

"The responsibility of the local Church and the responsibility of the Church universal do not exclude, but include, each other."

May this responsibility and the allegiance to the Church universal remain manifest in all of us, here in this country, and in everything we say or do.

Finally a word of welcome to the representatives of the press and other media

of communication. Our council is a public event. You make the public. The press interest, inside this country and abroad, has not diminished and is constantly growing. I feel inclined to say it is greater than our little country can cope with. This interest is gratifying and it stimulates our responsibility. You watch us, and you attend to what we say. That is why we must not make things that are only suggestions or subjects of discussion into things that are official and formal. Foreign journalists should be told this by their Dutch colleagues.

Freedom of discussion is a normal thing for us, also in this matter. When we are searching for the meaning of our faith in unity with the tradition of the Church, I hope that those who transmit our words to areas far outside our boundaries will not give the impression that we have already found it, let alone that we want to impose our views on the whole Church.

I should like to end by asking God's blessing for this consultation, in which such important issues are going to be discussed.



APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

The apostolic succession of the hierarchy operates within the apostolic succession of the whole believing community. In their witness, which is grounded on the witness of Christ and the apostles, the hierarchy is surrounded by the witness of all those who have received the Spirit. The Pentecost-event leaves room for the service of both the hierarchy and the believing community; by virtue of this perduring Spirit of Pentecost, the risen Lord weaves total harmony between the preaching, teaching and sanctifying of the hierarchy and the faith-inspired witness of his priestly People.

JOHN REMMERS

Authority:

Some Distinctions

Kevin Maguire

*THE MIND OF THE CHURCH IS A PRECIOUS
POSSESSION. IT CAN BE HURT WHEN
IT IS CONFUSED WITH LESSER VALUES*

Sir: At the risk of stating the obvious, it seems useful to make some distinctions with regard to papal authority and what may be called the "papal" or "papist" sub-culture. As I start by playing around with some cumbersome words connected with the concept of "centre", I had better define them. *Centripetal* describes a tendency towards the centre; *centrifugal* describes a tendency away from the centre. That which follows the latter tendency acquires *eccentricity*; that which follows the former acquires *centricity*.

1. There is a healthy tendency of the Catholic mind to seek an "orthodoxy of the centre" and a "centre of orthodoxy"; to seek to avoid eccentricity and centrifugal fragmentation; to preserve essential unity and common sense. This centripetal tendency has traditionally and in part efficaciously found a principle of centricity in the principle of communion with, and adherence to, the Bishop of Rome.

This tendency can, by exaggeration, be diverted so as to arrive at an *eccentric* position. This can happen when it becomes

identified with a preoccupation with, say, the *mores* of the Papal Court and the mental world of those who move within its ambience. The world of the Vatican represents a *sub-culture* within the life of the Catholic community. Such a sub-culture has every right to exist, but it has no claim to a position of centrality, to being normative for the life of the whole community.

2. A great number of factors, not least the influences of social inferiority in the past, clerical education and the Catholic press, has allowed the extension of this sub-culture outside the boundaries of Rome and Italy; such that, for example, to judge by the language of bishops and clergy, Catholic teachers and the Catholic press in England, the mental world of the Church in England has become a sort of appendage to that papal sub-culture.

Courtesy of Father Maguire, a Monk of Downside Abbey. This article appeared as a letter in The Tablet, (London), Nov. 23, 1968.

This situation is not identical with there being a common mind among those who share a common faith.

3. The faith of the Church is one.

The language of the faithful is not necessarily one.

4. The mind of the Church, being an expression of the faith of the Church, is also in principle one.

The mental world of the faithful is not the same as the mind of the Church, and is not therefore necessarily one.

5. Provided the Pope shares the faith of the Church, we may rightly identify the mind of the Pope with the mind of the Church, by the principle of Catholic centricity.

This principle does not demand that the faithful share the mental world of the Pope.

THE POPE'S AUTHORITY AND CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE

6. The mind of the Pope must be distinguished from the mental world within which he gives expression to it. The necessity of this distinction will be clearly recognised by those who do not share his mental world.

It will not be so clearly recognised by those within the papal sub-culture, since they may be unable to recognise clearly mental worlds outside their own.

7. From within the papal sub-culture it becomes questionable, and even offensive, even to suggest that the Pope operates within a particular mental world, since this seems to question the unique validity of the mind of the Pope, and therefore the oneness of the mind of the Church.

From outside the papal sub-culture the suggestion is only common sense, and it imperils no principle.

The relevance of these distinctions to contemporary discussion on questions of authority and obedience in the Church should be obvious. To take one example, and only as an example, let us consider reactions in England to the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Among those who feel very unhappy with the Encyclical there is rarely any question of straightforward dis-

agreement or disobedience. They may easily be accused of such attitudes, but at root what they really feel is that the Pope does not seem to understand what their experience has taught them.

I am not saying that they are right or wrong so to judge. The point is that they feel, perhaps obscurely, that the world in which the Pope speaks and the world in which they live are simply two different worlds. They feel, not so much *in opposition* to the Pope, as *paralysed* when it comes to having *any* attitude to what he says. In other words, they cannot really understand what he says, no matter how carefully it is explained to them.

COMMUNICATION AND DIFFERENT MENTAL WORLDS

The clergy cannot often be of much help here, because they too, when it comes to matters such as this, seem to speak a language that belongs to a mental world different from their hearers'. I was at a meeting not long ago where a group of educated laypeople had asked for a priest to come, not to dispute with them, but simply to explain the Encyclical in "language they could understand". Such a priest *could not be found*. The priest who came, for all his good will, could not speak their language. There was no communication between his mental world and theirs.

I do not wish to moralise about this state of affairs. The point is that where such a state of affairs exists it is too early to talk of agreement or obedience. Without understanding true obedience cannot even begin. ("Obedience" comes from the Latin "*obaudire*" = "really to listen to": this is difficult unless the existence of two mental worlds is recognised. It may take generations for the real message to get across.)

For another example, let us look at the ecumenical question. The ecumenical movement is a tendency towards Catholicity, towards a single, universal community. It is impertinent for the Catholic Church of today to regard itself as having all the characteristics and attractiveness of such a future community, or regard that commu-

nity as sharing the mental world of the present Catholic sub-culture. This would be true, even if there were only one Catholic sub-culture, but in fact there is not only one, and there must be many, inside and outside the Church, who regard with dismay the presumption of any single such sub-culture which would regard itself as authentic and unique.

It is right for us to ask all men to share our faith. It is not right for us, whoever we may be, to ask anyone to share our prejudices, our blind-spots, our eccentricity, our superstitions, our exaggerations, our special languages, our own particular ways of failing to be quite the Christians we should be; and it may be very hard for us to distinguish these features in ourselves.

HIERARCHY AND COMMUNITY

The hierarchy must do what the apostles did. They must work for the community, united with the other members of the Church and with the services that have been entrusted to the latter. In their apostolic succession, the hierarchy never stands apart from their communities; following in the footsteps of the apostles, they come to their communities with a dire need for the intercession and the cooperation of the royal priesthood of all the faithful, with a dire need for the charisms of the latter. All these things express the apostolic succession that belongs to the whole Church and to all her members.

JOHN REMMERS

Books Received

Luther: Right or Wrong?
Harry J. McSorley, C.S.P.
Newman Press and Augsburg Publishing House. \$9.95

After a six-year study of the opinions of Martin Luther, the writer defends the thesis that the reformer's basic protest is one that need not necessarily divide churches of the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Indeed, Luther's original aim was to be "a Catholic reformer." He became convinced that many things he had been taught, although some of them had never been endorsed by the Church, were not really in accord with scriptural teaching.

In 1525, he wrote "The Bondage of the Will" in which he expresses his protests and teachings, and assumed positions from which he did not depart. The core of his contention, the "unfreedom of the will", is that in re-establishing harmony between man and God, God's grace is decisive, not human initiative. He complimented Erasmus (although the latter did him less than full justice) for having "attacked the real thing, that is the central issue, (the "unfreedom of the will") you have not wearied me with those extraneous issues about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences and such like . . ."

Father McSorley's book reflects a tireless, prodigious effort to understand Luther in the context of his age, and pursues the reformer's thought in the vast literature that has accumulated around his ideas and real intentions. He concludes that Lutherans and Catholics are separated because of "a series of dreadful misunderstandings and blameworthy conduct on both sides." This book, issued in Germany in 1967, as the first volume in a series on Ecumenical Theology, must be regarded as a major event in ecumenical studies.

Jesus: Who Is He?
Flor Hofmans
Newman. \$6.95

Christianity is Christ and many Christians are studiously and prayerfully trying to "see" Jesus as he was in his earthly existence and to understand and follow "the present-day Christ." To help them do this, the author begins with the principle "We can see only with our own eyes, and our view is necessarily that of our own day." It is refreshing indeed to turn from official ecclesiastical laments, warnings and restrictions, on the one hand, and from protests, anger and whinings on the other, to a book which concentrates on Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever.

In this "modest contribution to a Christology in embryo," the writer seeks to disentangle the basic message of Jesus and the Gospels by means of a reflection on the ideas, personality and mystery of the Savior. In doing so the author moves easily among the best results in modern biblical exegesis and theology. The result helps us to focus on the "present activity of the resurrected one" in our own lives.

J.T.M.

The Church at Prayer
Ed. A. G. Martimort
Desclee. \$4.95

This is the first of a series of books on the Church's liturgy, translated and adopted from the French for English-speaking countries. When completed, it will be a most comprehensive treatment of Catholic worship. This volume introduces the series with a succinct outline of the entire work. As such, it conveys the topics, and an immense amount of information, that will be more fully treated in volumes to come. In itself, it constitutes a good

handbook that carries the treatment considerably beyond a commentary on the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II.

In scholarly fashion, the various writers in the present volume cover a wide range of subjects. They treat the meaning of liturgy, liturgical law, the meaning of the assembly and its dialogue with God. Sections on the significance of the homily and the relation between worship and sanctification are very well done. The history of the liturgy and a discussion of the various rites in East and West are enlightening—especially for those who resist liturgical change. There are excellent sections on the Liturgy and the Mystery of Salvation, Liturgy and the Magisterium, and Liturgy and Pastoral Action.

Names like Roguet, Dalmais, along with that of the editor, assure the essential correctness of the book. In itself, it provides an immense amount of knowledge and points to the fuller riches of the volumes to come.

Sacramentum Mundi

Edited by Karl Rahner with
Cornelius Ernst and Kevin Smyth
Herder and Herder

This notice is little more than a reminder to librarians that the first two volumes of the encyclopedia of theology projected by Karl Rahner are now available. The completed set will include six volumes, with the remaining four volumes promised at intervals of six months. The purpose of the work is to provide a source which contains more than information on occasional questions. It reflects "the fundamental effort to furnish the truths which should be the constant and vital possession of the believer as he tries to answer for his faith and his hope and the promise it contains."

The completed set will include 1,000 individual articles by a team of over 600 writers. The volumes are appearing simultaneously in English, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Spanish editions. While all these editions are basically identical, some adaptations to the special needs of particular regions have been made. The editors do not attempt to force unanimity of opinion, but rather to allow for the

sound diversity of approach to theological questions in a cooperative enterprise.

Many of the articles are from the pen of Karl Rahner. But associated with him are Congar, de Lubac, Joseph Fichter, Harring, Küng, Schillebeeckx, Schnackenburg, and scholars of comparable eminence. Topics intimately related to theology from fields like philosophy, science, sociology and history are also included. The English language edition has the good fortune to be in the hands of Cornelius Ernst and Kevin Smyth who, in a time when we are inflicted with much unworthy translation, give clarity, style and polish to this great work.

Subscribers to the first two volumes will have something of a theological feast. With relatively few exceptions, the contributions are of a uniformly high quality. And it is easy to predict that these rich summaries, reflecting the best insights of theology in the post conciliar era, will be profitably and eagerly read by an immense variety of people.

GUIDE

- A Publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
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GUIDE
2852 Broadway
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Guide Lights

"WHY A CATHOLIC?" . . .

This is an attempt to analyze a persistent and perplexing question asked by both newcomers to the Church and cradle Catholics. An attempt, because at heart I do not believe that it is the kind of question for which there is an "answer." The question roughly comes up like this: Why can't I follow Christ wherever I find Him? or,—Can't I be a Christian without formally belonging to a church? or,—As a Catholic, am I not obligated to belong to that community which seems most closely to resemble Christ? One way or another it involves separating Christ and the Church. It comes in various forms because it is usually an existential question anticipating personal decision and action by the questioner. There are as many variants of it as there are possible combinations of an attraction to Christ with judgments about the Church. This is why any attempt to deal with the question objectively is inadequate. It simply isn't asked objectively. However, objective discussion of it has some value insofar as it may help the catechist or other Christian "coach" in guiding a questioner along his way. No one "answers" this question for anyone else. The proper response is to help the questioner interpret its real meaning.

THE PATTERN OF VOCATION . . .

These questions are properly vocation questions, and the catechist's response should draw upon the Church's experience of vocation. That experience discloses two fundamental facts: 1) that God is the initiator of vocation, and 2) that the Christian is called into a community of believers. As the questioner wrestles with his personal

vocation this is the light the Church can throw upon his struggle. If he is truly in dialogue with the Church this lesson from her experience should lead him to re-examine the form of his question and set it in a larger perspective. It now might come out something like this: How does my distinction between Christ and the Church square with all of this experience of Christian vocation? It doesn't really and the reason is that the original question is an abstraction and Christian vocation isn't. If one is called to be a Christian he is not called to a one-to-one relationship with God but into communion with a people. The fact that these people may evince little visible communion with Jesus Christ is lamentable but cannot change the terms of God's summons. In the existential order, vocation is to Christ in his Church. This is the lesson of two thousand years of discipleship and that is really what the Church has to say in response to the original question. Once said, she has given her witness and the questioner must either reject it or begin to raise his sights toward other horizons within his current experience.

THE CHURCH AS WITNESS . . .

The Church has other resources to offer. She has 2000 years of witness behind her that can say something to the questioner about how he came to ask the question; how he learned of Christ; whence the attraction to him. For the Church is not only the gathering of Christ's disciples, but his epiphany as well. The difficulty encountered by many and probably the reason for the questions enunciated above, comes from the unhappy fact that over the centuries something has happened to the common understanding of "Church." Somehow or other the community of believers has become a "system" and, because so many Christians, both Catholic and others, identify their fellowship as somehow accepting a system, this kind of question arises. There

is no necessary connection between Christ and a "system" the way there is between Christ and the community of his followers. Hence the difficulty is understandable. Perhaps the greatest service that a catechist can give a questioner in these circumstances is to bear witness to the biblical realities of peoplehood and the community of the redeemed in Christ.

Further, it is reasonable to assume that a person living all of his life in a vestigially Christian environment may never have *consciously* experienced Christ in the Church. What he may never have realized is that ultimately the source of his knowledge of Christ is some kind of witness by the Church. However, this witness can be so weak in a given situation as to pass unnoticed, and his actual knowledge of Christ may well have come from secondary secular sources. Thus he can readily see the person of Christ and the Church as having separate existences and opt for one without the other.

THE CATHOLIC PROBLEM . . .

There is also a special problem for Catholics. Many do not recall the original experience of God's call to them and the circumstances of their response as it is so completely mixed up with their Catholic environment and upbringing. It is unprofitable and probably dangerous to suggest that they retrace their steps and re-discover that first personal response in faith. It is much more realistic and pastorally sound to deal with the present challenge and renewal of faith of which these questions are symptomatic. A sympathetic effort at helping such a Catholic locate the source of his *present* attraction to Jesus Christ is perhaps the best approach. Since today this very often includes things a person reads or hears at a distance from the Church as well as experiences in the Church directly, a real attempt is necessary to trace the relationship of this "echo-witness" to the Church. It should also be diplomatically pointed out that measuring a particular Church by the Christian ideal is to move from the existential to the abstract, and while this is valid one must take note of the gears that have been shifted in the process. God's call is existential; the Christian ideal is not. To base a personal vocation decision solely on the results of such a comparison is to put far too many eggs in one basket.

THE ECUMENICAL ARGUMENT . . .

While it is encouraging to note that a great many Catholics have absorbed enough of the Church's ecumenical awareness to begin asking questions about why they can't personally identify with a Christian community other than Catholic, it does create problems. Once again, drawing upon the Church's experience, the existential summons here is fundamentally to reform and renewal of one's own church. The first ecumenical task is to clean one's own house and this is not accomplished by moving next door. The Christian who has truly responded to the call of Christ finds himself in some community of believers. This is no accident. His presence there is a result of that call from God. If there is to be any shift toward another community it can only be in response to another call from God and not simply as the result of making a particular judgment about any Church.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE . . .

Nor is it an adequate filling out of Christian vocation to take as a point of departure the principle of freedom of conscience and reason from it to a freedom of choice about the Christian community, if any, in which one will live his faith. This is a legitimate argument but an inadequate basis for personal decision. Again, God is the initiator of vocation and to begin and end the identification of his call by this kind of abstract reasoning does not do justice to the commitment he demands.

The Church's task is to open up the entire arena of her experience and to encourage the questioner to do likewise with his. Since the tendency is for both to start from a much narrower perspective—the Church from a particular style of teaching, the questioner from a particular subject of fascination, this is a necessary preliminary. Also, since the proper response of man to God is obedience in faith, then humility and a large amount of listening are essential accompaniments to the kind of intellectual seeking we have been discussing. If these are present then the questioner can be quite sure that his ultimate response to God's call will be genuine. If they are not present he can never be sure that his subsequent action is the result of anything more than personal choice or intellectual conviction. These are no mean values but they are not acts of faith, and faith after all is the basic posture of the Christian.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.